

REMINISCENCES

Another early grape grower was a naval officer from Ohio, Lieut. Commander Eugene B. Thomas— (Captain was a title conferred upon him, to his amusement, by his Polk County neighbors). I met him and Mrs. Thomas at McAboy's in 1885, saw them later in Thomasville, Ga., and spent the summer of '87 with them, when we boarded at "Antler Hall" overlooking the French Broad from what was soon to be the Biltmore Estate. On his retirement, after finding the climate of a Boston suburb undesirable, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas came back to McAboy's, bought a neighboring orchard and built on it the house which, later, became the winter home of the Washburn family. When I returned to Tryon, encouraged to do so by Mr. and Mrs. Thomas, I found them occupying their new home. Although he was a semi-invalid, Mr. Thomas had had a vineyard planted within sight of his home, across the Pacolet, beyond the present Lynn schoolhouse. In a few years, it was sold to Judge Bacon, when a McAboy guest, and eventually came into the hands of his son, Mr. F. P. Bacon. It was his first business undertaking here and if he has skipped a Tryon enterprise since, I am sure it was an oversight and not intentional.

That Mr. Thomas took a very early interest in grape growing seems to me proved by my recollection that it was he who selected he told me, the "Kniffen" system, for growing the vines, used in vineyards along the Hudson River, but not in this part of the country. By this method the grapes hang from the wires, and make a more attractive looking vineyard. In '95, it was fortunate to have an industry really becoming to the landscape, since, at that date, the landscape in Tryon and environs was mostly vineyard. I can list only a limited number of those vineyards.

Beyond Mr. Whitney's and beginning on Laurel Avenue, was a large vineyard under the management of Mr. Harold Doubleday, son of Gen'l. Doubleday, in partnership with Mr. Sidney Lanier, old-

est son of the poet. This son, and the youngest son, were, at that time living with their mother in one of the Mason cottages at the end of Lanier Street. At one side of the Doubleday property, a small vineyard had been planted for Mrs. Hatch, whose home, comparatively recently, was transformed by Mr. Brooks, after a long period in Mr. Gillett's ownership. That vineyard still stands, below the waterworks and is harvested by Mr. J. W. Taylor.

At the other end of town was a large vineyard owned by Mr. Robert Alston and his father. It was, at first, on the south side of the railway track. Enlarged, it finally included the slope to the gate from the house he built which became the Beaumont-Speed place.

At the foot of Warrior Mr. Geo. E. Morton was an enthusiastic fruit and flower grower. His success with flowers has a fitting memorial in the border of crepe myrtles which extends from his home along the Asheville highway. The Lindsey grape-growing tract on Warrior Mountain covered many acres. Beyond it, up the mountain side of the valley, a small vineyard belonged to Mr. Alexander Beatson, beyond which the property later called the Cruse place, had not only grapes but an astonishing variety of other fruit. The best known industry connected with the Cruse place was the serving of "Afternoon Tea" to Tryon and its guests, who scaled the heights in the horse-drawn, two-seated vehicles of the day.

The two Rankin vineyards, one now owned by Mrs. Fuldner and the other eventually in the possession of Dr. Juanita Lea, came later, as did Dr. von Kahlden's, about 1912, and the Vollmer grape-growing acreage even later.

—(To Be Continued).

E. R. Wincher
Photographs
Tryon, N. C.